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The Education Report.

There is an annually increasing feeling of interest in the reports of the Education Department. We hear so much about this department in the intervals that those amongst us who are prepared to believe everything we hear are fearful lest each report should be the last. The Department is at any rate more apt than others to have a "heathen" system of education; others, not so unkind, claim that the system is merely "godless," whilst another party, which worries not so much about the religious aspects of the teaching imparted as about its merely meritorial value, tells us with portentous wagging of the head that the system, excellent as it may be, must break down of its own weight. We look in vain through each annual report for evidences of heathendom and godlessness, or for signs of the invariable divergence of the educational system from our own. While its critics are using bad language and prophesying uncomfortable things, the department is to all appearance pursuing the even tenor of its way without paying the slightest attention to the prophets. Perhaps this is because the notion that the way of the department is not hard. Every year finds it prepared to admit failures when there are failures, and to claim successes. It does not require a Solomon to judge on the relative value of the failures and of the successes, for the mere existence of a syllabus of instruction, which would be impossible if all that is said against it were true, is a triumphant proof of its excellence. Steering its course along the middle way —avoiding sectarianism on the one side and uniformity of instruction on the other—the educational system of South Australia is one which should commend itself to the support of fair-minded citizens. It has its faults. For our part we still believe that it aims too high, and that especially in the matter of the Advancement of Gaelic and other indigenous languages it interferes unduly and improperly interferes with private enterprise. But this evil of translating elementary education into a knowledge of more than the rudiments, is one which is bound to decrease with the growth of the colony.

In the report of the Minister of Education, which was yesterday presented to Parliament, the enthusiast in educational matters will first look for an account of
the success of the new arrangement, the teaching of drawing and the instruction in elementary science. But before one can gratify his natural curiosity in these respects it is abundantly necessary to con

scious that the efforts of the last ten years have cost the country. Pounds, shillings, and pence are vulgar things, but on them hinges the position of the best persons and things in the world. Let us, then, look at the accounts for a moment. Last year 42,000 children were instructed throughout the colony, and the returns have never been taught before in any one year. The teaching of these children—including everything but the expenditure on buildings, which was deferred from another that the operational cost—cost £103,350. How does this compare with the returns for former years? Last year the total cost, with the same exception, was £106,000; in 1886 it was £104,000, and in the preceding year it was by £13 less than in the year before. The importance of this comparison becomes evident when we call to mind the number of scholars and the cost per head, which it will be well to mention only for the years 1885 and 1888. In 1885 there were 472 schools, with an average attendance of 27,000 pupils, con

ducted at a cost of £2 15s. 6d. per child in average attend-

ance. In 1888 the schools numbered 536, and the average attendance amounted to 28,320, whilst the cost per head was £3, more than in 1885. One does not expect a reduction in the cost per head of schools in an inc
crease in expenditure, though at the same time it is right to point out that if the compulsory clause alone is taken into considera-
tion the cost per head is only £10½, as against £13 4d. in 1885. With all the facts before us it is impossible to get over the feeling that, granted the necessity for a State system of education, the scheme adopted in this colony is worthy of support and comm-

manding of praise.

Now the way is clear to us for the consi-

deration of what we may call the qualifications necessary for the place of honour assigned, as is most fitting, to the subjects most recently intro-
duced into the curriculum. The Inspector-General evidently does not care very much about the inclusion of drawing and elementary science points; he thinks that he has done as much as is possible in the way of cramming the memories of the boys and girls who attend the State schools, and rather resents as a cruel the movement of the Technical Commission. If this is his state of mind he will doubtless command the adherence of many supporters who think that the view that non multum, sed multa should be the order of the day in education. It ill becomes Mr. Hartley of all men in the world to take this stand, for he has done a great deal both in his position as the permanent head of the Education Department and as a member of the University Council to advance the contrary proposi-
tion, non multum, sed multa. How-

ever, he is decided enough in regard to the new subjects. These “can only be intro-
duced very gradually; the students have not been remarkably successful.” Possibly the results may be better in future years, but meanwhile it may be hoped that influential enthusiasts will cease inforting their theories of education upon the department. It would be all very